



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Infrastructure

Minutes of Proceedings

16 October 2024

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Mrs Deborah Erskine MLA (Chairperson)
Mr John Stewart MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Danny Baker MLA
Mr Keith Buchanan MLA
Mr Stephen Dunne MLA
Mr Mark Durkan MLA
Mr Andrew McMurray MLA
Mr Peter McReynolds MLA

Via video conference:

Mr Cathal Boylan MLA

In Attendance:

Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Phil Pateman (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Lawless (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr William Kinnear (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced in public session at 10:01am.



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1. Apologies

None.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed Members that she was pleased to attend the event to mark the commencement of rail services at Belfast Grand Central Station on Sunday, 13 October 2024.

The Chairperson advised that she, along with a number of other Members, had attended the Road Safety Roadshow event on Tuesday, 15 October 2024 in Parliament Buildings. The Chairperson expressed her thanks to the Emergency Services personnel and those who had shared their personal stories at the Roadshow and encouraged everyone to take the opportunity to attend Road Safety Roadshows in their local areas, if possible.

In noting that it was Community Transport Week, the Chairperson put on record her thanks to the Rural Community Transport Network for its invaluable work across Northern Ireland.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9 October 2024.



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5. Matters Arising

The Committee considered a draft response to the Committee for the Executive Office in relation to the Programme for Government 2024-24.

Agreed: To forward the response to the Committee for the Executive Office.

6. Correspondence

Correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) relating to a recent announcement of a pilot study to permit the use of specified bus lanes for taxi vehicles.

Agreed: To ask the Department for further information on the pilot study.

Correspondence from the Committee for Communities regarding disability rights and representation.

Agreed: To request a copy of DfI response to the Committee for Communities.

Correspondence from the Committee for the Economy regarding the extension of the Translink Nightmovers Service.

Agreed: To request a copy of the Minister's response to the Committee for the Economy.

Response from Newry, Mourne and Down District and Derry City & Strabane District councils regarding grass cutting and road safety.

Agreed: That Committee staff will undertake an analysis of the approaches to grass cutting across all council areas.

Correspondence from the Minister for Infrastructure on the decision by the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) to terminate the contract for Vehicle Testing Equipment.

Agreed: To schedule oral evidence in closed session from the DVA into the Forward Work Programme.



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The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- Update from the Minister for Infrastructure on his meeting with the Community Transport Association regarding funding;
- Department for Infrastructure Roads Southern Division – Annual Report to Ards and North Down Borough Council 2024-2025;
- Department for Infrastructure Roads Western Division – Annual Report to Derry City & Strabane District Council 2024-25; and
- Committee for Finance regarding the Outturn and forecast outturn for August 2024.

7. Planning and Infrastructure Key Issues - Mineral Products Association (Northern Ireland) – Oral Evidence

The following representatives joined the meeting at 10:14 am:

- Mr Gordon Best, Regional Director, Mineral Products Association (Northern Ireland) (MAPNI);
- Mr Mark Quigley, Contracts Director Breedon Group and Chairman of MPANI Highway Maintenance and Construction Group; and
- Mr David Chambers, Commercial Director Gibson Bros Banbridge and Member of the MPANI Highway Maintenance and Construction Group.

The representatives provided an overview of the key issues faced by the industry in respect of road maintenance, planning and infrastructure.

A question and answer session followed.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The representatives left the meeting at 11:07 am.



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8. Budget 2024-25 update – Department for Infrastructure – Oral Evidence

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 11:08 am:

- Susan Anderson – Director of Finance;
- Declan McGeown – Deputy Secretary for Water and Departmental Delivery;
- Colin Woods – Deputy Secretary for Transport and Road Asset Management; and
- Judith Andrews – acting Deputy Secretary for Climate, Planning and Public Transport.

The officials provided an update on the Department's budget position including details of current pressures and reduced requirements, which will be used to inform its October monitoring submission.

A question and answer session followed.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The officials agreed to provide further information on the following:

- the cost of bi-lingual signs and road markings to be installed as part of a pilot in West Belfast and details of the factors that will be used to assess the outcome of the pilot;
- the source of the ring fenced funding for the A5 project, for which a reduced requirement has been identified for this financial year;
- DfI's assessment of the circumstances where developers can currently contribute to the water and waste water infrastructure;
- an update on the Department's letter of 2 July 2024 regarding the elements that will be used to determine the 'transport budget' for the purposes of the calculation of 10% spend for active travel under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022; and



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- written evidence on DfI's submission to the Department of Finance for the October MR.

The Departmental officials left the meeting at 11:49 am.

9. RaISe Briefing - Statutory Planning Consultees – Oral Briefing

The following research officer joined the meeting at 11:51 am:

- Ms Suzie Cave, Research Officer, Research and Information Service (RaISe).

The researcher provided an overview of the key issues and themes in the research on statutory planning consultees.

A question and answer session followed.

The researcher left the meeting at 12:15 pm.

Agreed: To ask the Department for:

- Its definition of what constitutes a response from a statutory consultee, and whether it is based solely on meeting timescales or if the quality or relevance of the response provided is also taken into account;
- A disaggregation of the number of small, medium and large renewable energy planning applications including the average time for applications to be considered or approved; and
- A response to the issues contained in the RaISe paper relating to the planning application validation checklists not previously addressed by the Department.



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10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: To proceed with the scheduled evidence as set out in the Draft Forward Work Programme.

11. Any Other Business

None.

12. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, 23 October 2024 at 10:00 am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:19 pm.

Mrs Deborah Erskine
Chairperson, Committee for Infrastructure
23 October 2024